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The Development of Sustainable Tourism in Cameroon: A Case of Mount Cameroon Ecotourism Organisation

By

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DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I hereby declare that this report and the work reported herein are entirely my original work. All information taken from the published and unpublished works of others writers have been duly acknowledged in the text and references are given in the list of bibliography.

Beppu, July 2012

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ABSTRACT

This study titled “The Development of Sustainable Tourism in Cameroon: A Case of Mount Cameroon Ecotourism Organisation” examines the role of ecotourism in the development of sustainable tourism in Cameroon. The study argues that through ecotourism, sustainable tourism practices will be realised in Cameroon. The study begins by looking at the problems faced by the tourism industry in Cameroon and how these problems have been contributing to retard the development or practice of sustainable tourism in the country. It also looks at current attempts to develop a sustainable tourism industry in Cameroon, the techniques employed to get stake holders involved and the challenges faced in this process. The outcome of the study is generalised so as to depict what Cameroon needs to do to promote sustainable tourism. The work ends by suggesting some recommendations that could be used to facilitate this process. The research is base on an analysis of data derived from reports, libraries, archives, oral interviews conducted with some prominent tourism officials and staff of Mount Cameroon Ecotourism Organisation. The research concludes that that ecotourism is an important element in the quest to develop a sustainable tourism industry in Cameroon.

Table of Contents

DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
ABSTRACT.....	iv
CHAPTER ONE – INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Background.....	1
1.2 Objectives of the Study	3
1.3 Introduction to the problem.....	3
1.4 Hypothesis.....	6
1.5 Research Questions	6
1.6 Significance of the study.....	7
1.7 Research Design.....	8
1.8 Study Area	9
1.9 Data Collection	10
CHAPTER TWO – CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW	12
2.1 Background	12
2.2 Sustainable Tourism.....	14
2.3 Tourism Problems in Cameroon	17
2.4 Ecotourism as Sustainable Tourism.....	19
2.5 Literature Review.....	20
2.6 Case Study – Mt Cameroon Ecotourism.....	25
CHAPTER THREE - RESULTS AND INTERPRETATIONS	28
3.1 Ecotourism in Mount Cameroon.....	28
3.2 How to Develop Sustainable Tourism in Cameroon.....	30
3.2.1 Education	30
3.2.2 Marketing & Promoting Tourism	31
3.2.3 Community Involvement	32
3.2.4 Environmental Protection Laws.....	34
3.2.5 Harassment of tourists.....	35
3.2.6 Provision of Capital	36
3.3 Results of the Hypothesis.....	37
3.4 Interview Quotes.....	39
CHAPTER FOUR – CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS	42

4.1 Summary	42
4.2 Recommendations.....	45
REFERENCES	50

CHAPTER ONE – INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Tourism is amongst the world's fast growing industries due to an improvement in the global transportation and communication network (Lenon & Foley, 2000). The sector is generating enormous wealth for nations by creating jobs and attracting foreign revenue. Many countries in the world depend on the tourism industry, making it a major source of revenue for many countries (Wilkerson, 2003). The World Tourism Organisation reported that the tourist industry has witnessed steady growth over the two decades preceding 2001, and that same year, the industry accounted for up to 11 per cent of the global economy. Considering the fact that the tourism industry has a lot of potential, it has to be properly managed otherwise the activities of the industry could end up having a negative impact on the population. However, it is important to note that tourism figures are sometimes artificial because some countries inflate the number of tourists they say they receive annually, so as to boost their country's image as a tourist destination and attract more visitors there (Singh, 2008). The most spectacular aspect about tourism today is that it has grown to become a dynamic activity and the sector has continued to experience steady growth rates, which range from 3 to 5% annually. In the year 2000, the tourism industry experience 7.4% growth rate which was considered as outstanding. In the year 2000, tourist arrivals over the world were just under 700 million, almost doubling the figures registered in 1989 (Singh, 2008). Global tourism revenue also soared over the same period from \$221 billion to \$476 billion (Singh, 2008). Cameroon is enjoying a slow but steady growth in its tourism industry although critics say that the country's tourism industry can perform better (Sumelong, 2012). Despite the fact that the government has talked much about improving the flow of tourists into the country, it is disappointing to learn that the efforts that have been put in place by the government are

unable to achieve the goals for which they have been designed (Woodgate et al, 2011). Only minor efforts have been put in place to achieve these goals and Cameroon's tourism industry has no clear cut strategy for the long term. With a few exceptions, such as the Mt Cameroon ecotourism project, the country's entire tourism industry needs to be reorganised and the government is yet to develop a plan for the tourism industry in the years ahead (Fonka & Mesape, 2010).

Cameroon, which is located in the Central African sub-region, is a major tourist destination in the region considering the fact that unlike many of its neighbours, Cameroon has enjoyed relative peace and stability since it gained its independence in the early 1960s (Woodgate et al, 2011). In addition to the fact that Cameroon is stable economically and politically, it is also blessed with an abundance of tourist attractions such as its sandy beaches in Kribi and Limbe, Mt Cameroon in the South West Region, which is the highest mountain peak in western and central Africa, and the majestic culturally-rich palaces in the north of the country. Although it is endowed with a huge tourism potential, Cameroon tourism is still in its infancy. Cameroon, which only attracts about 500,000 tourists per year, is not in the list of the major tourist destinations listed by the World Tourism Organization (WTO) (Onambele, 2010). In 2006, Cameroon received 451,000 tourists according to statistics from Ministry of Tourism (Lew, 2008). The Minister of Tourism back then, Baba Hamadou, said in early January 2009 that the country was visited by 496,000 tourists in 2008. The information was relayed to great fanfare in the edition of the newscast on national television as a record while much remains to be done. This observation was made even by the Prime Minister, Head of Government during the 5th session of the national tourism board meeting that held on February 14, 2008 in Yaounde (Onambele, 2010). The meeting which included also the administrations involved in the tourism sector, private tourism operator associations, established that Cameroon has enormous tourist potential which is unfortunately

underutilized. Unlike other African countries like Botswana, Senegal, Kenya, South Africa or Morocco, where tourism is emerging as a real industry, the sector has stalled in Cameroon and there is much work to be done in order to make the industry to achieve its true potential (Sumelong, 2012).

1.2 Objectives of the Study

This study, which seeks to analyse the development of sustainable tourism in Cameroon has a number of objectives that have been designed to enable it meet the overall purpose of the study. Each of these objectives is unique, and seeks to uncover a particular aspect about tourism in Cameroon, which will enable readers to have a deeper understand on the topic. When these objectives are assembled together, they will give a clearer picture of an evaluation of the sustainability within the Cameroon tourism industry. In addition to that, the study will also seek to identify ways through which sustainable practices can be incorporated into Cameroon's tourism sector. The objectives of this study include:-

- i- A study on the development of resources that can promote tourism in Cameroon.
- ii- An evaluation of the role of public private relationship to sustainable tourism
- iii- The assessment of the management of tourism finances by the state
- vi- An overview of what the government and private tourism agencies do to promote sustainable tourism
- v- Identify ways through which sustainable tourism can be developed for the future

1.3 Introduction to the problem

Cameroon is often described as Africa in miniature, considering the fact that it can offer tourists a lot of facilities that they cannot find anywhere else in Africa (Woodgate, 2011). Thanks to its topography, climate fauna and flora, peoples and traditions, Cameroon has been known to offer tourists a warm experience. Indeed, all 10 regions of Cameroon are blessed

with tourist attractions that are located in the various regions (West, 2004). In the South region, for example, the seaside town of Kribi offers sandy beaches, with the added bonus of the magnificent Lobe Water Falls, the single place on earth where a river pours directly into the Atlantic Ocean (West, 2004). In the North, the wildlife parks of Benue, Boubajida offer tourists a unique experience and opportunity to come face to face with wildlife species of every type. The Northwest region is the capital of craftsmanship, and has all type of sculptors who produce a variety of artefacts (Baum, 2006). In addition to this, it also hosts chiefdoms with splendid palaces and strange cultures. In the West region, there are also many traditions and relics, and huge historical monuments that have contributed to the development of modern the day Cameroon (Hudgens & Trillo, 1999). Traditional festivals in the region are often rich in colour and offer tourists the opportunity to observe large annual gatherings to celebrate traditional festivals such as those of the people of Bamoun (DeLancey & Mark, 2000). This helps to give visitors a good knowledge of the history of the people of King Njoya. In consideration of the above, Cameroon's western region is attractive to tourists that seek to come face to face with African culture. In addition to its cultural attraction, the western region is punctuated with mountains that make it possible for tourism to mix a great hiking experience and the colourful tradition and cultural celebration of traditional festivals that come up almost on a weekly basis around the western region (Fonka & Mesape, 2010).

In the Southwest region, the Korup Park, excursions on the chariot of God, Mount Cameroon, and Lake Ossa, Ekom Kam falls and large plantations of the coast have the potential to attract foreigners. In Adamawa, tourists can visit wildlife reserves and caves, and other ethnic feudal lamidos. In the Far North, large chiefdoms, lunar landscapes such as the Kapsiki hills and lakes with high concentrations of hippo. Parks such as waza, Kalamaloué in Kousseri mozogo Gokoro may contribute to the development of the tourism industry (Onambele,

2010). In parts of Eastern and Central regions, tourists can visit settlements of pygmies, a group of people who continue to live in the forests today and the vast expanse of the forest and discover the culture of the Gbaya and Maka, the great Akok Bekoe caves, the Dja Reserve (West, 2004). These are assets owned by Cameroon, which can help to raise revenue in the state if properly harnessed. Irrespective of the above mentioned potential, Cameroon's tourism industry is relatively under developed and has a long way to go.

The above mentioned resources are underutilized and little known to the global public. It is therefore important to set up mechanisms to bring out the tourism potential by servicing the site development, public awareness, building roads, communication, means of transport to arrive at these destinations with little stress (Fonka & Mesape, 2010). In addition to these, the welcome of tourists in airports and hotels, staff training, and especially marketing campaigns and communication at national and international level will help to improve the sector (Onambele, 2010). This will make it possible for many local and international tourists to discover the destination. This is probably the price that the Cameroonian tourism can contribute to the development of national economy and to promote the image of Cameroon (Hudgens & Trillo, 1999). Considering the fact that Cameroon's tourism industry is relatively underdeveloped, this is the right time to introduce the concept of sustainable tourism. This will help to ensure that all efforts to develop the industry are carried out mindful of the importance of sustainability. Sustainable tourism will improve the livelihood of those employed by the sector without compromising the future of the resources that have helped to make Cameroon a tourist destination. In this light, it is right to assert that the development of sustainable tourism in Cameroon will result in a brighter future for the tourism industry and those who depend on it for a living.

1.4 Hypothesis

The hypothesis of this study is that “the promotion of ecotourism will lead to the development of sustainable tourism in Cameroon.” In other words, sustainable tourism will make the tourism industry better in the future than it is at present. This study shall either approve or refute this hypothesis based on the results of this study. If approved, it can serve as a recommendation to Cameroon’s tourism authorities to ensure that encourage this form of tourism to promote sustainability in the sector.

1.5 Research Questions

In order to guide the researcher to achieve the overall aim of this study, which is to evaluate the development of sustainable tourism in Cameroon, the researcher has come up with some questions. These research questions will guide the study to ensure that it remains focused on the goal it is designed to accomplish. Research questions will also ensure that the study pays attention to every aspect about the research topic. In this case, each of the research questions, in a way or the other shall be designed to provide important answers on how the government and private partners can develop a sustainable tourism industry in Cameroon. The research questions for this dissertation are listed below:-

- 1.) How do ecotourism practices contribute to the sustainability of the tourism industry in Cameroon?
- 2.) What has Cameroon been doing in the past to promote sustainable tourism?
- 3.) Have these efforts (if any) been successful in helping the government to achieve such goals?
- 4.) What can the government and private tourism agencies do to promote sustainable tourism in Cameroon?

5.) Do the government and private agencies have the required capacity to promote sustainable tourism? If not, what can they do to overcome the challenges they will face in such a task.

1.6 Significance of the study

This study is important because we live in an era when the world has become conscious of the importance of sustainability and efficient use of resources. If Cameroon fails to promote sustainable tourism, future generations would be unable to fully benefit from the abundant tourism resources that exist in Cameroon. For example, if a hiker goes to the mountain and dumps perishable refuse next to an area designed for setting up tents, this will rot and attract mosquitoes. Mosquitoes transmit malaria and if they bite any tourists on the trip, it is likely that they will contract malaria. If tourists go home sick, the destination will not receive favourable recommendation. This makes it unsustainable tourism because the current generation has done little to promote sustainable tourism by ensuring that the tourist sites are kept neat, free of mosquitoes and any illnesses. If the tourists return home safe and spent time in a clean environment with hospitable tour guides, they will likely recommend the destination to other tourists. This is sustainable tourism.

In the light of the above example used as an illustration, this study is important because it seeks to promote sustainable tourism. Sustainable tourism is important for the government and the local population because it encourages growth and expansion of the industry. It considers the future of the industry when making decisions, thereby making the industry profitable in the short and long run. The tourism industry is important employer and also attracts foreign revenue into the country. It is therefore necessary for Cameroon's tourism authorities to ensure that sustainability is incorporated in its activities in order to ensure that future generations benefit from what this generation has enjoyed. There are instances when

lakes, which used to be important tourist destinations have dried up, thereby wiping out an entire destination and all the associated benefits it came with. Lake Chad, which is located between Nigeria, Chad and Cameroon, has been gradually drying up over the years. This is partly because of global warming and human activities on the lake. The lake, which used to host marine wildlife, has been stripped of these species, making it difficult for the lake to attract the number of tourists it used to attract in the past.

1.7 Research Design

This study will be qualitative and will make use of secondary sources such as publications, websites and academic journals. It will use a qualitative approach to seek answers to the research questions outlined above. The study will also include a number of interviews with tourism personnel who are highly knowledgeable with regards to the Cameroon's tourism industry. In addition to its qualitative design, this will be a case study research. A case study research is one in which the researcher chooses a single unit and studies it in detail in order to generalise the findings of the study (Gerring, 2004). Case study research is good because it immerses the researcher into the topic, by giving he or she the opportunity to experience first hand, what he or she is about to study. In addition to the above, case study research gives room for the study to carry out a much more detailed analysis of the phenomenon it seeks to uncover. Although case study research is good for some topics, its major weakness includes the fact that it uses data gathered from a single case to generalise its results (Gerring, 2004). This can be misleading because not two organisations are exactly the same. Such study fails to take into consideration the unique nature of different units amongst which one is chosen for the study. The fact that a particular tourist destination, which was chosen as a case study, fails to keep its premises clean does not imply that all the other destinations were not clean. Such generalisations do not always reflect the reality on the ground. Despite its weakness

identified above, case study research remains an important methodology in social science research considering the fact that it is expensive to study every single unit of analysis in a study like this one. It is affordable to choose a case study and carry out a detail analysis of that structure and then use the outcome of the study to draw conclusions and recommendations that apply to a wider audience beyond the unit of analysis. It is on the basis of the fact that there is not enough time and resources to study every tourism organisation in Cameroon that the researcher has chosen Mt Cameroon Ecotourism Organisation as case study for this research.

1.8 Study Area

The case study for this research will be Mount Cameroon Ecotourism Organisation, which is based in Buea, the South West Region. This is an ecotourism organisation which was set up by the German development mission in Cameroon to promote ecotourism practices within the Mt Cameroon region. Prior to its creation, tourists visiting Mt Cameroon used a single track which was designed to get tourists to the summit using the shortest possible distance. With the arrival of this organisation, tourists were offered other options, such as using other longer routes which gave tourists the opportunity of viewing wildlife on the mountain such as elephants, antelopes and other wildlife species harboured by the mountain. This initiative blended the usual hiking experience with wildlife viewing in a single trip. The organisation also introduced sustainable programmes in order to discourage wildlife poaching on the mountain. In order to achieve this goal, it rehabilitated hunters by training them in alternative professions such as tour guides. This study would cover both the organisation and the Mt Cameroon area where the activities of the organisation take place. It will analyse the way the organisation promotes tourism in the region and also seek investigate the behaviour of tourists. The goal is to evaluate the level of sustainability involved in the manner in which the

organisation operates. As earlier mentioned, this study is case study research, meaning that the outcome of this study is expected to throw more light on the entire industry.

1.9 Data Collection

Data collection will be done through interviews and secondary sources, which include text books, online resources and publications. This exercise has been facilitated by the fact that there is an abundance of already published material on this topic. This will make it relatively easier for the researcher to collect data which shall be analysed for this study. Open interviews shall be conducted with the following individuals:-

- Manager of Mount Cameroon Ecotourism Organisation
- Technical adviser of the organisation
- Former DED technical adviser (DED is a German development NGO that started the organisation)
- The Mayor of Buea Rural Council

The above mentioned individuals have been chosen based on the fact that they have strong ties to Mt Cameroon and are knowledgeable about the history of the ecotourism project on that destination. The individuals were also chosen because they expressed their willingness to participate in the study. Data gathered from the interview conducted online with the individuals mentioned above. The accounts of these individuals and data gathered from text books, local newspapers and even books published abroad about Mt Cameroon has provided a deep understanding about the concept of sustainable tourism in Mt Cameroon as reported in the later chapters of this dissertation. Data collection for this study has been made relatively easier as a result of the fact that many authors have written about sustainable tourism in Cameroon. Cameroon has outlined its vision to improve the number of tourists attracted into

the country annually. This has resulted in an increase in the number of media stories that write about sustainable tourism in Cameroon, thereby facilitating the task of the researcher.

CHAPTER TWO – CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Background

The concepts used in this study are drawn from a global framework of sustainable development with emphasis on the destruction of the environment and ecosystems and the use of conventional methods to achieve economic growth without considering the environmental impacts. The human race is threatened by climate change and unsustainable use of natural resources, which many scientists have identified as a contributing factor to global warming (Agrawal, 2002). Mankind depends on the natural environment and the ecosystem for its survival. On this premise, sustainable use of natural resources remains a key to our survival as humans. Mankind is in need of water, air and land to survive, and any action that pollutes or which negatively alters the form of the above mentioned elements will equally threaten our survival. The forest, for instance, affects human life in several ways. In addition to the oxygen which the trees release into the atmosphere, mankind depends on the forest for food, jobs, medicine and raw material. This implies that sustainable management of these resources can help to maintain or even improve the quality of life not just for those who live in rural communities close to the forests, but also to those who live in far of cities and distant countries (Sackmen, 2003). Elements such as cooking oil, timber, fuel wood, cooking oil, bush meat and even medicinal plants come from the forests.

In Cameroon, nearly 70 percent of the population depends on the primary sector for livelihood (Lambi, 2001). An annual population growth of about 2.2 percent can alter the dynamics and result in the prevalence of the abuse of environmental resources in Cameroon. Poverty and unemployment has pushed many Cameroonians to indulge in unsustainable activities such as poaching, indiscriminate cutting down of trees for wood or medicinal tree

backs, which has affect the biodiversity in most of our forests (Agrawal, 2002). The tropical forests, which spreads across many countries in the Congo basin harbours innumerable wildlife species, some of which have been listed as endangered or threatened. Virgin forests which have existed before the arrival of the human race, with trees that have taken more than a hundred years to grow are indiscriminately cut down by logging companies that seek to maximise profits even at the detriment of the environment (Lambi, 2001). This affects the ecosystem because the forest constitutes the habitat of many species. The tropical forest is currently suffering from a deforestation rate of 0.6% per year (Lambi, 2001). Although this figure appears small, the impact has been tremendous over the years. The gradual degradation of Cameroon's equatorial forest can be explained, to an extent, by the neo-Malthusian and pluralist theories of forest degradation.

At the global level, efforts to combat environmental degradation have been around for quite some time. In 1972, the United Nations Conference on Human Environment had begun seeking lasting solutions on how to effectively manage the environment (Ambrose-Oji, 1997). These efforts were followed up in other UN led summits such as Rio De Janeiro and recently the United Nations Climate Change Summit which was organised back in 2007 in Bali, Indonesia. In the said summit, delegates were expected to seek for more pragmatic solutions expected to mitigate the impact of climate change, and begin preparations to come up with a new binding agreement to replace the Kyoto Protocol which is expected to expire this year (Woodgate et al, 2011). Although the Bali conference did not arrive at an agreement, it laid out the framework for the development of a new agreement. In 2011, the United Nations Climate Change Conference was organised in Durban, South Africa (Woodgate et al, 2011). In the said conference, participants have agreed on the sketch for a new agreement to fight against climate change, which is necessary fight against climate

change. The agreement, which is expected to be finalised in 2015 shall go into effect in 2020 (Woodgate et al, 2011). These changes will definitely help to promote ecotourism, considering the fact that tourists will have to travel using more environmentally friendly method due to the legally binding agreement that will compel nations to limit carbon emissions. Transportation plays an important role in the tourism industry as tourists account for more than a quarter of international travel.

2.2 Sustainable Tourism

The World Commission on Environment and Sustainable Development (World Commission on Environment and Development, WCED) defines "sustainable development" as one which meets the present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (Sackmen, 2003). In the second World Conservation Strategy, (1990) "Caring for the Earth", the term sustainable development means to "improve the quality of life for human beings to enable them to live within carrying capacity of ecosystems that constitute the life support" (Ostrom, 1990). The need for sustainable development is part of global priorities expressed in the recommendations of Agenda 21 at the Rio Conference and the Fifth Community Action Programme for Sustainable Development.

Starting from the basis that tourism is part of a broader framework of sustainable development, tourism should not be considered as an end in itself but as a way for a more harmonious development of societies around the world considering the fact that it creates jobs. Tourism is inherently neither positive nor negative to the environment. What determines the relationship between tourism and environmental degradation is the manner in which tourism activities are conducted in a particular environment (Woodgate et al, 2011). The correlation between tourism and the environment must be based on the impact of tourism in

each area where it grows and it will be talk of an instrument of resource development, be it natural and cultural, or agent of a waste of resources (Woodgate et al, 2011). Prior to the recent growth in environmental awareness the tourism industry was characterised by unsustainable practices which contributed enormously to the degradation of the environment and a decline in tourism arrivals in some poorly managed destinations (Sackmen, 2003). The tourism industry back then was considered as unsustainable because of the following four reasons:-

1. It did not take into account the importance of conservation of natural systems, or the use of natural resources as a value.
2. It focused on growth, while ignoring the qualitative aspects of it.
3. He distributed unevenly the benefits derived from tourism.
4. It did not include the territory and its singularities in the tourism, strengthened the homogenization and depersonalization.

Faced with an extensive model and the depredation of natural resources, it is necessary to propose a model of sustainable tourism that will ensure that the global tourism industry takes into account the effects of its activities on the environment (Ostrom, 1990). Although there is remarkable improvement when it comes to the promotion of sustainable tourism around the world today, it is important to note that there are some regions in the world where unsustainable tourism is still rife (Sackmen, 2003). Many tourist destinations in some parts of Africa, Asia and Latin America, are still characterised by reckless tourism activities that have a negative impact on the environment.

Sustainable tourism is tourism that takes into account the respect and preservation of socio-cultural and natural resources (Tanyi, 1998). Sustainable tourism promotes the reduction of

tensions between the tourism industry, visitors, host communities and the environment (Sackmen, 2003). It can be considered as tourism that is economically viable in long-term, planned and managed, which means the non-mass and low impact. It is also environmentally friendly, that is, adapted to the carrying capacity of natural and cultural spaces, minimizing the effects of seasonality. It is also integrated and diversified (in connection with the hinterland, adapted to local specificities, based on local businesses). Although the global tourism industry has become more aware of the importance of sustainable tourism today, it is disturbing to learn that many stakeholders in the industry fail to put these notions into practice (Agrawal, 2002). In many impoverished developing countries, the tourism industry continues to suffer from unfriendly environmental practices such as poor waste management. In some instances, the governments and stakeholders do not have adequate means to promote sustainable tourism practices such as proper waste management and treatment (Woodgate et al, 2011). This makes it difficult for tourism investors to strike the right balance between their primary motive, which is profit maximisation, and the need to properly respect the environment, which is necessary in order to ensure that tourism destinations continue to be profitable in the long run.

In the Congo Basin, for instance, biodiversity tourism is an important factor that attracts many of the tourists that visit the countries in this region (Lambi, 2001). Regrettably, the tourism industry in some of these countries is suffering from unsustainable activities such as logging which destroys wildlife habitat and the bush meat trade, which involves the indiscriminate killing of threatened and endangered species (Tanyi, 1998). The extinction of wildlife species will lead to a drop in tourists that are attracted to the region by the vast biodiversity in the equatorial parks. It is therefore important to adopt ecotourism as an instrument for the promotion of sustainable tourism. Failure to do so shall lead to disastrous

consequences in the long run for the tourism industry. In January 2012, poachers invaded the Bouba Djida national park armed with AK 47s and other heavy weapons which they used to massacre more than 200 elephants in this region (Sumelong, 2012). Such unsustainable practices will affect the tourism industry in the long run. The development of ecotourism in the region shall lead to a drop in poaching and other such unsustainable practices. In Cameroon, the Seme and Kribi beaches have been touted for keeping their premises clean and ensuring that visitors do not drop objects around the beach. Both beaches are characterised by good waste management programmes which have made them healthy and attractive to visitors.

2.3 Tourism Problems in Cameroon

Although much has been done lately to improve the tourism sector in Cameroon, it is important to note that much is left to be done. Despite the rich potential of Cameroon, which is described as, "Africa in miniature" in terms of tourism, the country has not yet surpassed the 500,000 visitors per year to qualify as a tourist destination as required by the texts of the World Tourism Organization (WTO) (Sumelong, 2012). In 2009, Cameroon received 402,580 tourists according to figures available at the Ministry of tourism. The celebration of World Tourism Day liable June 2, 2010, was marked by several meetings held by the Ministry of Tourism to identify and propose solutions to the various problems that affect the industry (Fonka & Mesape, 2010). Thus during the seminar-workshop to train journalists on responsible tourism, held from May 31 to June 2 in Yaounde by APTOUR (Press Association for Responsible Tourism), it was established that lack of promotion of Cameroon's tourism potential on the international scene and the inadequate promotion of eco-tourism were amongst the main problems faced by Cameroon's tourism industry (Fonka & Mesape, 2010). Jean Kueté Solar, journalist with the television channel New TV in Yaounde, stated that

Cameroon has a ministry of tourism which does not have the necessary means to carry out its duty as it ought to have done (Sumelong, 2012). The budget for this ministry is insignificant compared to the challenges ahead. In addition to that, the sector lacks effective organisation. According to Bamamba Jean Baptiste, president of Cameroon TOURCOM, the tourism industry is characterised by administrative problems and police harassment, lack of adequate childcare, lack of access to sites, the lack of marketing and communications (Fonka & Mesape, 2010). This view was also shared by Mr Boniface Piga, Superintendent of No. 2 at the Ministry of Tourism who confirmed on the same occasion saying that the sector suffers greatly from ineffective communication (Fonka & Mesape, 2010).

It is through communication that the ministry can pass across messages on awareness, training. Lack of professionalism and financial capital has made it almost impossible to develop some tourism destinations (Sackmen, 2003). It is therefore understandable when Carole Favre expert and teacher of tourism at the University of London to Colchester, who attended events marking the celebration of World Tourism Day in Cameroon in 2010 remarked that, "tourism in Cameroon is not developed and does not yet have a specific direction (Fonka & Mesape, 2010). Certainly there are opportunities, but there is still need to develop strategies that are more thoughtful and promote collaboration between local people and the government." This is an indication of some of the problems faced by Cameroon's tourism industry which need to be addressed in order to ensure that the sector improves.

In order to effectively develop ecotourism in the Mt Cameroon area, it is necessary for the local authorities to create a truly functional ecotourism (Ostrom et al, 2002). Equitable benefit sharing between the various stakeholders involved is necessary, otherwise, some of the stakeholders could become reluctant making it difficult to achieve the collective goals as

defined in the 1996 and 1998 workshops titled, "The Development and Promotion of tourism in the Mt Cameroon Project area" (Tanyi, 1998). In order to develop ecotourism in the region, it is necessary for the various stakeholders to receive training where necessary to boost their knowledge and commitment to the cause. These include vital principles such as hospitality management, tour guides, general awareness about the importance of waste management in tourism and respect for the environment (Ostrom et al, 2002). Effective communication between tourists and guides, and the local population is necessary for the development of a sustainable ecotourism industry taking into consideration the fact that tourists who have a nice experience will recommend the destination to their friends and relatives back home (Agrawal, 2002). With this in mind, the local population has to be drilled on how to treat tourists nicely so as to keep them returning not just to Mt Cameroon, but Cameroon in general.

2.4 Ecotourism as Sustainable Tourism

There is no universally acclaimed definition for the concept of ecotourism. In the context of this study, ecotourism is defined within the context of the International Society for Ecotourism's definition. According to the International Society for Ecotourism, "Ecotourism is responsible travel to natural areas which conserves the environment and improves the welfare of the local population. Responsible travel refers to travelling in a way that minimises negative impact on the society" (Tchouto, 1999). Irrespective of the fact that there is no universally acclaimed definition for the term "ecotourism," it is important to note that ecotourism can be identified using a number of characteristics listed below, which distinguish it from other forms of tourism (Poukouyou et al, 1996).

- Ecotourism contributes to the promotion and protection of both natural and cultural heritage.

- It considers the interest of local population in its development and planning in an effort to improve the lives of members of the local population.
- Ecotourism promotes travelling in small groups so as to offer travellers a better interpretation of natural and cultural heritage.

Unlike the other forms of tourism, ecotourism strikes the right balance between profit maximisation, which is the goal of every tour operator, and respect for the environment (Ekane, 2000). This is because eco-tourists are interested in flora and fauna, which need to be protected in order to ensure that the sector continues to exist. Otherwise, the sector will lose its main source of attraction, thereby putting the future jobs and the entire sector at risk. Ecotourism is often carried out in natural destinations that are free of pollution as travellers are interested in seeing how this generation is preserving the environment for the future (Ambrose-Oji, 1997). It observes the local culture and customs, without having any negative impact on the way of life of the local population. One of the most important aspects of ecotourism is the desire to promote the welfare of the local population, by creating opportunities that can improve the livelihood of the local population in the short and long term (Tako, 1999). Many eco-tourists are often interested in education of themselves in an effort to gain a better understanding about the destination and local peoples. In addition to site seeing, travellers often seek to understand the history and interaction between the local peoples and the ecosystem.

2.5 Literature Review

There are a number of authors who have written on tourism in general and ecotourism in particular and their work would be of importance to this study. Allard Blom, (2001) in his thesis titled “The Ecological and Economic Impacts of Gorilla Based Tourism in Dzanga

Central Africa Republic” investigates how ape viewing ecotourism could contribute to raise revenue needed to run the park and for the local community. His study concludes that revenue from ecotourism is the only revenue that could be locally generated to supplement government spending on protected areas while pointing out that substantial additional funding would be needed to protect the parks biodiversity as the present protected area is insufficient both in quality and quantity.

In their work titled visitors perspective on environmental impacts and Management in the Bako National Park, Cynthia LM et al, (2001) observe that ecotourism confers economic value on the protection and conservation of natural areas because income derived from the influx of visitors could be of great significance to the local communities and also in the provision of finance needed to manage the national parks. They are however quick to reiterate that despite the beneficial relationship between ecotourism and natural resource conservation, the impacts of ecotourism may also adversely affect the resources on which it depends. They cite examples such as damage to plants caused by trampling, removal of specimens through harvesting and the disruption of animal behaviours such as feeding, breeding and mother-offspring interaction.

In a manual titled “Cameroon Tourism Guide”, Wala makes an inventory of the existing tourist attractions in Cameroon. He research team realised that Cameroon has tourist wealth that require some valorisation. Among these are parks, wild life sanctuaries, reserves, zoos, lakes, botanic gardens etc. He recommend that for these attractions to be valorised, businessmen and NGOs have to work together to expand tourism in Cameroon. He further observed that based on experience from some African countries, the tourism industry supplies currency and employment. In this regards, developing the sector has to fall in the upper part

of the list of government priorities. He concludes that it is time for Cameroon to take tourism seriously in order to be considered a renounced destination by World Tourism Organisation. He ends by proposing a number of measures which can be employed for this to happen.

In a research project titled “The Development of tourists Sites in Limbe Over the Last Ten Years”, Tata Yengo identifies the tourist sites in the Limbe municipality and the type of activities carried out on these sites. He evaluates the development of the sites since 1997 while making a critic of the state of their development. He observes that resources of great interest to visitors in this municipality are diverse and range from beaches, mountains, museum and the Limbe botanic and zoological centers. He concludes that in spite its potentials, tourism in this municipality has been experiencing stagnation and would continue to decline if immediate measures are not put in place. Even though a lot has been written on the development of sustainable tourism in Cameroon, not much has been written about the Mount Cameroon area. This work seeks to explore the development of ecotourism potentials around this region using the Mount Cameroon Ecotourism Organisation as case study.

Akumsi Alfred (2005) in his book, "Community Participation in Wildlife Management, the Mount Cameroon experience, MCP, Cameroon," the author gives a detailed analysis of what sustainable tourism is all about. Prior to the publishing of this book, there had been reports about widespread poaching by hunters in the neighbouring villages that surround Mt Cameroon. Instead of using the forces of law and order to fight against this illicit practice, the author proposes a community based approach which recommends the identification and training of hunters in alternative professions. This strategy has been used by the Mt Cameroon ecotourism project and it is yielding enormous results. Poaching is one of the major challenges faced by the ministry of wildlife in Cameroon (Sumelong, 2012). A census

carried out by an under cover agent in 2006 revealed that the average hunter slays at least two hundred wild animals annually, many of which are enlisted as threatened or endangered (Woodgate et al, 2011). Wildlife management is an important component of ecotourism on Mt Cameroon because poaching has depleted the mountain's biodiversity resources (Fonka & Mesape, 2010). Each hunter who trained in an alternative profession and finally quits hunting spares the life of about 200 animals annually (Sumelong, 2012).

Baum Mandy (2006) outlines a plan for the promotion of tourism by Cameroon's ministry of tourism. In her work titled, "Marketing Plan For Mount Cameroon Ecotourism Organisation," the Junior Technical Adviser, identifies inefficient marketing as one of the causes for the slow growth in Cameroon's tourism sector. She outlines a plan on how the sustainable tourism can be promoted by the Mt Cameroon project so as to attract tourists to the mountain. This book is important for this study because the goal of sustainable tourism is to promote the livelihood of those who depend on the sector while using the sectors resources in a judicious manner that does not compromise the future of the industry. In order to ensure that the sector creates and maintains many jobs while raising revenue, it is necessary to have a well designed marketing plan in place that will help to continuously attract tourists to the mountain (Baum, 2006). If tourists have a positive feedback, they will transmit the message to other potential tourists who will also be persuaded to make a trip to the mountain. The cycle will continue to grow uninterrupted if the tourists are treated to the same level of hospitality over time. A proper marketing plan for Mt Cameroon ecotourism will excel only if the marketing is accompanied by high quality services offered to tourists in the field.

Tanyi Takang (1998) in his work titled, "An evaluation of participatory approach in Natural Resource Management, Mount Cameroon Project as a case study," gives a detailed evaluation

of the importance of participatory approach in the success of forestry management programmes. Mt Cameroon's forests constitute a treasure to the wildlife that depends on it. The author states that unless all stakeholders around Mt Cameroon are educated on the risks associated with the cutting down of trees, their actions will continue to hurt the wildlife that depend on the forests. In his recommendations, instead of just stopping the local population from cutting down trees, the author calls of traditional rulers to create tree nurseries where they can nurse and plant trees in order to replace the trees they cut down for fuel. This resulted in the adoption of the "cut one tree plant two" policy of the Mt Cameroon ecotourism project. The reality is that the project has understood that there are some settlements that have access to no other form of fuel except wood (Mt Cameroon Ecotourism Organisation, 2009). The project promotes sustainable use of wood by advising villagers to put of their flames once they finish cooking so that they can still use the charcoal to cook in the future. This is efficient use of wood that can help to slow down the pace at which the villages consume wood (Mt Cameroon Ecotourism Organisation, 2009).

The development of sustainable tourism is important for the future of the industry otherwise, irresponsible tourism will lead to the degradation of tourist destinations and the environment (Woodgate et al, 2011). This is because like many other natural resources, most tourism resources can be damaged in the course of exploitation. For this reason, it is necessary to ensure that sustainable principles are applied in order not to compromise the future of the world's resources in every human activity including tourism. This makes it important for the tourism industry to review the way its activities affect the environment and livelihood of local populations in the medium and long term. It is important for the industry to strike the right balance between the future of the industry and profit maximisation.

Ekane (2000) notes that "The world's resources are dwindling at an alarming rate, and this is a serious cause for concern. Some natural resources are renewable, usually at very high costs, whereas others are completely irreplaceable. Therefore, it is imperative that resource management should fully involve the consideration of long-term resource costs. Management plans, programmes and schemes without long-term considerations are bound to be very expensive, if not disastrous for the future. There is a complex interrelationship between the components of the ecosystem and this reciprocal relationship makes the survival of some components greatly dependent on the performance of others. Consequently, an effect on some components causes direct or indirect impacts on others. There is also a link between forest degradation and poverty."(pp. 1)

2.6 Case Study – Mt Cameroon Ecotourism

Mt Cameroon is one of Cameroon's oldest tourist destinations in Cameroon considering the fact that it is an active volcano which attracted missionaries, colonial administrators and researchers in the 19th Century (Fonka & Mesape, 2010). Although there are many activities that organise guided trips to Mt Cameroon, these activities have not been well organised and most of the tour organisers do not do much to ensure that the benefits trickle down to the local population (Baum, 2006). Ecotourism in Mt Cameroon is aimed at promoting income generation from the mountain without extracting the biodiversity therein. It is important to note that there are many clandestine activities that currently occur on the mountain. These include the indiscriminate cutting down of trees to extract tree barks for local medicinal products, the hunting of butterflies and beetles by poachers who supply them to wildlife traffickers (Woodgate et al, 2011). Poachers also kill endangered species such as elephants and apes for ivory and meat. These activities have negative impact on the environment. For

this reason, authorities are seeking to promote alternative and sustainable income generating activities on the mountain such as ecotourism, which can generate income without depleting the natural resources harboured by the mountain (Neba, 1999).

Initial efforts to develop sustainable tourism around Mt Cameroon began in December 1996, following the identification of the various stakeholders and the organisation of a workshop titled, "The Development and Promotion of tourism in the Mt Cameroon Project area" (Tanyi, 1998). Participants in the workshop included tourism promoters, the provincial delegation of tourism, traditional rulers, local municipal authorities and some members of the general public. This consultation served as the platform for the development of ecotourism around Mt Cameroon. Two years after the initial consultation, a second workshop was organised to evaluate how far the various stakeholders had gone towards achieving their goals. The second workshop was well attended by participants from the various villages that surround Mt Cameroon (Tako, 1999). During the 1998 workshop, deliberations resulted in the drafting of a new plan for the development of ecotourism in Mt Cameroon. Considering the fact that ecotourism includes the promotion of sustainable tourism which includes respect for the environment, participants agreed that there was need to rehabilitate hunters and other individuals carrying out clandestine extractive activities (Agrawal, 2002). Priority was given to hunters, who were trained and rehabilitated into new professions such as tourist guides, considering the fact that they are knowledgeable about the mountain. Those who could not work as tour guides were trained in alternative professions, such as taxi driving and security guards and hired by private security firms. The goal of the Mt Cameroon Project was to ensure that local populations benefit from ecotourism in the mountain through activities that did not pose any threat to the mountain (Mount Cameroon Ecotourism Organisation, 2009).

Mount Cameroon Ecotourism Organisation is leading the way when it comes to the promotion of ecotourism in Cameroon.

CHAPTER THREE - RESULTS AND INTERPRETATIONS

3.1 Ecotourism in Mount Cameroon

Although the concept of ecotourism is relatively new in Cameroon, it is a growing industry which is promoted by government because of its ability to preserve natural environment and alleviate poverty. Although ecotourism in Cameroon remains a relatively small industry, the sector is already experiencing encouraging growth which is a motivating factor for further development of the sector (Mount Cameroon Ecotourism Organisation, 2009). The ministry of tourism has continued to promote ecotourism in Cameroon by drawing attention to the country's regional diversity, describing the country as "Africa in miniature". There are new packages designed to promote ecotourism in Cameroon. These include the Mount Cameroon Inter communal Ecotourism Board. This non-profit organisation, which concentrates on developing community-based ecotourism in Cameroon, has paved the way for the development of sustainable tourism in Cameroon. Also known as Mount Cameroon Ecotourism Organization (Mount CEO), the goal of this organisation is to promote ecotourism in the country by integrating tourism and environmental conservation on Mt Cameroon. As ecotourism continues to develop, many projects around the country have been introduced to ensure that ecotourism in Cameroon is developed so as to support all the stakeholders such as tourism businesses and local populations in the short and long run. One of the ways through which ecotourism improves on the livelihood of local population is by using guides hired from local villages who already possess extensive indigenous knowledge of their surroundings. This knowledge is used to develop attractive environmentally friendly tourism packages that appeal to tourists. Some of these guides include former hunters who, thanks to ecotourism in Cameroon projects, have been rehabilitated to protect wildlife.

The effective development of sustainable tourism is important for the future of the tourism industry not just around Mt Cameroon, but across Cameroon at large. Considering the fact that concept of ecotourism is relatively new in Cameroon, there is still much to be done in order to develop a truly sustainable tourism industry. Fortunately, Cameroon's Ministry of Tourism has come to realise the importance of developing a sustainable tourism in the country. The Mt Cameroon ecotourism project is one of the most visible attempts by the Cameroon tourism industry when it comes to the country's renewed commitment to the development of sustainable tourism in Cameroon. This study has identified a number of ways through which the government has been working to develop sustainable tourism in Cameroon, and it has come up with a number of recommendations to help the government to achieve its ultimate goal of developing a sustainable tourism industry. The results of this study are based on data gathered from the field and secondary sources. After conducting interviews with a number of stakeholders involved, this study has come to realise that in order to develop a sustainable tourism industry through the promotion of ecotourism, the following points need to be considered by both the government and all the stake holders involved in the industry. The motto of Mt Cameroon ecotourism project is “income for village communities and conservation of biodiversity through ecotourism in Cameroon.” As the motto suggests, the goal of the development of a sustainable ecotourism on Mt Cameroon is to promote tourism while improving the welfare of local population. The principles of sustainable tourism are implemented as a result of cooperation between the government, local communities and tourism businesses around Mt Cameroon (Mount Cameroon Ecotourism Organisation, 2009). Mount CEO, has developed a multi stakeholder structure was adopted and implemented in 1998 and 1999 so as to manage ecotourism in Mt Cameroon. At the regional level of the organisation, a board of directors determines policies and at local level,

meanwhile there are a number of committees that coordinate activities through the ecotourism office.

3.2 How to Develop Sustainable Tourism in Cameroon

3.2.1 Education

The development of sustainable tourism in Cameroon has to take into consideration the fact that all the stakeholders in the industry have to be educated about the importance of sustainable development (Agrawal, 2002). In the course of this study, the researcher has come to realise that some of the stakeholders in the industry do not have a grasp about the importance of sustainable tourism (Sackmen, 2003). The stakeholders need to believe in the importance of sustainable industry before participating in the development of such an industry. Unfortunately, some of the stakeholders did not appear to have a good knowledge about sustainable tourism. Unless a sustainable plan is put in place, Mt Cameroon would continue to experience a steady decline in the number of tourists that visit Mt Cameroon. It is disturbing to note that the number of tourists that arrive at Mt Cameroon has steadily declined over the years. Some tourism destinations are not properly catered for and there appear to be no waste management plans at some of the huts on the mountains where tourists camp during their trips (Sackmen, 2003). Many visitors dump their waste just a few meters from the huts, which attract unwanted insects and rats that come to seek for food in the refuse piles. Operating in such conditions is unsustainable because mosquitoes can transmit malaria to visitors who would not recommend the trip to their friends over fears that they might fall sick (Mount Cameroon Ecotourism Organisation, 2009). Sustainable tourism should take into account how present actions can affect the future of the industry because if things go wrong, it is the industry that will suffer in the future (Tanyi, 1998). In this respect, it necessary to ensure that guides have the proper training that will enable them to guide tourists around the

mountain and also ensure that the tourists do not mess up the mountain. In addition to educating the various stake holders on the importance of hygiene in sustainable tourism, it is also necessary to put in place a proper waste management treatment plan (Mount Cameroon Ecotourism Organisation, 2009). This includes collection and treatment of waste to keep mosquitoes away from accommodation sites around the mountain. Although ecotourism has been touted around the world as one of the ways through which sustainable tourism can be developed, it is important to note that ecotourism needs to be properly planned in order for it to be sustainable (Akumsi, 2005). For the most part, many of the people that are employed by the tourism sector do not have the proper training required to carry out their job (Mount Cameroon Ecotourism Organisation, 2009). For this reason, the company is characterised by unprofessional services which can slow down the development of sustainable tourism. Ecotourism can only thrive in an environment that offers professional services, leaving tourists satisfied and willing to return to that destination or recommend it to their friends when they travel back home.

3.2.2 Marketing & Promoting Tourism

One of the major obstacles to the development of the tourism industry in Cameroon is a poor marketing and promotion strategy. This has hurt the industry over the years leaving tourists who consider visiting Africa to choose other alternative destinations in East Africa. Most of the tourists who visit Cameroon do so based on word of mouth recommendation from other tourists who have previously visited the country. Cameroon has been described as Africa in miniature considering the fact that it has wide variety of tourism attractions (Sumelong, 2012). Just like other successful African countries, such as Kenya and Tanzania, that respectively attract more than a million tourists annually, Cameroon can boast of virtually every kind of tourist attraction that is present in these countries (Mount Cameroon

Ecotourism Organisation, 2009). In Kenya, the tourism industry is the second largest sector after the agricultural sector. This has been made possible by the fact that Kenya has successfully developed and marketed its tourism industry to a wider international audience. Cameroon also has national parks that harbour all of Africa's savannah and forest wildlife species, numerous wildlife parks, the highest mountain peak in West and Central Africa, exotic sandy beaches and a rich cultural heritage (Agrawal, 2002). Unfortunately, many tourists are not aware of these attractions making it difficult for them to select Cameroon as their next destination. Cameroon's Ministry of Tourism does not promote the industry in the international media outlets, thereby leaving the industry fairly unknown to new tourists. We currently live in the communication age whereby new communication and information abound, making it easier to reach out to millions at relative lower costs today. That notwithstanding, Cameroon's Ministry of Tourism is yet to take full advantage of this wonderful opportunity to market its tourism industry beyond its national borders (Woodgate et al, 2011). Eco-tourists will be anxious to give a shot at Cameroon's new ecotourism packages which include hiking, bird watching and wildlife watching in Cameroon's numerous wildlife parks (Fonka & Mesape, 2010). A sustainable tourism industry can only be developed in Cameroon if the government puts in place a carefully planned marketing and promotion strategy at the international level, which will attract tourists from developed countries in Asia, Europe, North America and Australia, the major regions that harbour millions of international tourists (Mount Cameroon Ecotourism Organisation, 2009).

3.2.3 Community Involvement

The development of sustainable tourism should include the participation of local population and help to improve their livelihood or welfare in general (Ekane, 2000). Although the Mt

Cameroon Ecotourism Project was developed after consultation with local villages, it is important to note that there is need for more involvement of the local population in the sector in order to make it beneficial to those involved (Fanso, 1989). Although the 1996 and 1998 consultations included the participation of local community leaders around Mt Cameroon in the drafting of a strategy for the development of an ecotourism project around Mt Cameroon, it is important to note that local community involvement has been limited at the level of these consultations (Tako, 1999). The local community need to be more active in the development of sustainable tourism industry. The government needs to review its current strategy and help to prepare the local communities to participate in the development of ecotourism. In some other regions of Cameroon, traditional festivals attract large number of local and international tourists that come to witness the events (Ambrose-Oji, 1997). Although the local communities around Mt Cameroon have similar festivals, they have failed to attract tourists because the festivals have not received the kind of media attention enjoyed by the other festivals. Local community involvement in the development of a sustainable tourism industry should include the creation of jobs for local communities. Local craftsmanship has to be encouraged by the government and local authorities to promote the work of local craftsmen around the Mt Cameroon region. Tourists often seek to return home with souvenirs of their trips which they take back home. These can include paintings or local sculpture. Unfortunately, little is done to promote such initiatives that can create new jobs and promote a sustainable tourism sector around the Mt Cameroon region. The influx of tourists is beneficial to local businesses (Neba, 1999). This is because local tourists eat in the restaurants, sleep in the hotels and transport themselves in local taxis, thereby infusing cash into the local economy. In return, the public is expected to put up responsible behaviour and be cheerful in their encounters with the tourists (Neba, 1999). Unless tourists feel welcomed to a particular destination, they would not return to it or recommend it to others. The

community therefore needs to participate in the development of a sustainable tourism industry by being hospitable to tourists.

3.2.4 Environmental Protection Laws

There is need for the development and enforcement of stricter laws in order to develop a sustainable local tourism industry (Sackmen, 2003). Some tourists are attracted to Mt Cameroon because they believe it is a rich experience that includes a blend of hiking, bird viewing and close encounters with other exotic wildlife such as mountain gorillas and elephants (Lambi, 2001). Uncontrolled poaching will eventually result in the extinction of such species, which constitute a major reason why some tourists pick this destination. Ecotourism can therefore be developed by ensuring that stronger laws are put in place to protect the biodiversity. Although some laws are already in place, most of the punishment for wildlife crime is weak and rarely implemented by the local judiciary. It is therefore important for the government to renew its fight against wildlife crime on Mt Cameroon in order to ensure that it continues to possess its rich biodiversity, which is expected to continue attracting tourists in the future. In addition to the wildlife trade, indiscriminate cutting of trees around the forests that lie on the foot of Mt Cameroon is detrimental to the development of a sustainable tourism industry. This can be partially explained by the fact that loud noises caused by engine saw scares animals and drives them far away from the hiking paths, making it more difficult for tourists to spot wildlife along their trail as time goes on (Mount Cameroon Ecotourism Organisation, 2009). In addition to that, the indiscriminate cutting down of trees, which constitute the habitat of many species alter the ecosystem in many ways. Developing and marketing ecotourism on Mt Cameroon can only be properly carried out if an efficient plan is put in place to eliminate poaching and lumbering which alters the ecosystem around Mt Cameroon. Poaching and cutting down of trees by individuals around

the region is propagated by the fact that Mt Cameroon is surrounded by impoverished communities (Baum, 2006). Unless poverty alleviation programmes are put in place, desperation would continue to force local populations to consider going up to the mountain to hunt wild animals and sell their meat. The government needs to identify the root causes of these problems, rather than just seek to resolve the effects of these actions of the local population.

3.2.5 Harassment of tourists

Meanwhile the importance of hospitality towards tourists is crucial to the development of a sustainable tourism industry; it is disturbing to note that inhospitable behaviour towards tourists is a major reason why some tourists would not recommend Cameroon to their friends. Instead of ensuring that tourists are protected and feel secured while in Cameroon, some unscrupulous policemen harass vehicles transporting tourists (Mount Cameroon Ecotourism Organisation, 2009). They meticulously check the tourists' documents in an attempt to find the least error so as to collect bribes from tourists. This upsets some tourists who return home with a very negative impression about Cameroon irrespective of the hospitable behaviour and warm welcome they receive from the other people whom they encounter during their trip (Woodgate et al, 2011). This one unpleasant experience ruins their trip and impression about Mt Cameroon and Cameroon in general as a tourist destination. In order to ensure that such behaviour, which hurts the industry, does not continue recurring, it is important to provide appropriate training to police officials on how to approach tourists and ensure that policemen who attempt to collect bribes from tourists are punished in an attempt to eliminate such unfriendly behaviour which damages the image of the country abroad (Woodgate et al, 2011) (Fonka & Mesape, 2010). Similarly, other civilians who are found to extort money from

tourists must be properly punished because such behaviour can only ruin all the attempts put in place by the government to develop sustainable tourism through ecotourism in Cameroon.

3.2.6 Provision of Capital

An important measure that can boost ecotourism and the development of a sustainable tourism environment in Cameroon is provision of capital to finance the development of tourism sites (Mount Cameroon Ecotourism Organisation, 2009). Although Cameroon can boast of a number of sandy beaches along the country's Atlantic coast, it is disturbing to learn that none of these sites has been developed to meet up with the international standards of other beaches in the world (Fonka & Mesape, 2010). This makes it difficult for the country to attract high end tourists who prefer to live in high end hotels. In this light, it is accurate to state that lack of capital is an obstacle to the development of sustainable tourism in Cameroon. Tourists can only be attracted to the Cameroon's beaches if they also harbour five star hotels that can provide accommodation to tourists who are not budget minded. The paradox of Cameroon's tourism industry is that most of the destinations have been designed to meet up with the needs of budget minded travellers, most of whom cannot afford the finances to travel abroad on regular basis. It is therefore necessary for the government to invest in sustainable tourism such as the development of expensive hotels that can attract wealthy travellers (Onambele, 2010). Lack of infrastructure to link up the respective tourism destinations is also a major problem for tourists travelling to some of the country's national parks that harbour a great diversity of wildlife (Onambele, 2010). Unlike other major tourism destinations, Cameroon's national wildlife parks are isolated and only connected to the rest of the country by broken muddy roads that are difficult to ride on. This makes it difficult for the tourists to get to their respective destinations, exhausting them to unacceptable levels. The

development of sustainable tourism in Cameroon cannot be achieved without developing the infrastructure that tourists need to make their stay comfortable in Cameroon.

3.3 Results of the Hypothesis

The hypothesis of this study as outlined in chapter one is based on the assumption that, “the promotion of ecotourism will lead to the development of sustainable tourism in Cameroon.”

This study confirms the above mentioned hypothesis because it has examined the ecotourism industry in Cameroon, using Mt Cameroon as a case study. After analysing data gathered for this study, it can be confirmed that ecotourism can help in the development of sustainable tourism in Cameroon. This is because an examination of efforts to promote ecotourism in Cameroon suggests that much is already being done in consideration of the principles of sustainability. For example, one of the initiatives that have been put in place by the Mt Cameroon ecotourism project is the elimination of poaching and indiscriminate cutting down of trees. Protecting wildlife and the environment for future generations is a sustainable practice. This alone is enough grounds on which the confirmation of the hypothesis for this study can be based. The ecotourism project was designed in consultation with local communities that surround Mt Cameroon and is beneficial to the local population considering the fact that many local hunters have been retrained and offered fulltime jobs as tourism guides (Mount Cameroon Ecotourism Organisation, 2009). Other benefits of the local population include the fact that this type of tourism has increased the inflow of tourists who visit the region, thereby leading to the infusion of cash into the local economy. Although much is yet to be done as indicated above, it is important to note that from every indication, ecotourism provides an integrated approach that combines tourism and sustainability.

The findings reported above also provide answers to the research questions mentioned at the beginning of this study. The initial research question sought to find out how ecotourism practices contribute to the sustainability of the tourism industry in Cameroon. This question has been address in the course of reporting the outcome of the hypothesis. With regards to what Cameroon has been doing in the past to promote sustainable tourism, the study clearly indicates that sustainable tourism is a relatively new concept in Cameroon which can be traced back to the mid 1990s during the first conference to draft a strategy to promote ecotourism in Mt Cameroon (Tanyi, 1998). To an extent, these efforts have helped the government to achieve its goal of promoting sustainable tourism irrespective of the fact that much is yet to be done (Mount Cameroon Ecotourism Organisation, 2009). The government and private sector have the capacity to develop ecotourism. All they need to do is work together meanwhile there is need for the government to allocate more financial resources to the tourism industry to enable the Ministry of Tourism to invest in marketing and promotion of the sector at the international level (Akumsi, 2005). Irrespective of the fact that the government and other stakeholders have expressed genuine commitment to the development of sustainable ecotourism in Cameroon, it is important to note that it will take a while to achieve the ultimate goal of making the tourism sector in Cameroon to develop the level of sustainability observed in the tourism industries of other developed countries, taking into consideration the fact that these efforts are less than two decades old in Cameroon (Baum, 2006). The relatively lower levels of literacy rates in Cameroon is also making it a little more complex for the average Cameroonian to understand the need to protect wildlife for future generations.

3.4 Interview Quotes

Christina Dressler, the Manager of Mount Cameroon Ecotourism Organisation believes that, "The Mt Cameroon ecotourism project is a major success considering the fact that this is the first project of its kind that we are carrying out here in Cameroon. We are grateful for all the support that we have received from the government, traditional rulers and the general public that has demonstrated the spirit of hospitality to the tourists who have made it to Mt Cameroon thanks to our guided tour packages. We have developed new tracks which tourists seem to enjoy considering the fact that the new track makes it possible for tourists to watch elephants and other wildlife on the forests that surround Mt Cameroon and the Savannah vegetation that lies on its slopes. However, we continue to face minor problems such as illicit tour operators in town who approach tourists and offer to take them to the mountain at a lower cost. This hurts our project because they keep all the proceeds and nothing is contributed towards the improvement of the villages that surround Mt Cameroon. We do hope that in the future, the government will be able to put some measures in place to curb this practice. Without which I would say Buea is wonderful town with amazing people and destination. Tourists who visit Mt Cameroon can also take advantage to include Limbe in their itenery as it is just 30 minutes drive from Buea and it is a coastal town which hosts the botanic garden and the Limbe Wildlife Center, and the nationally acclaimed Seme Beach."

9th May 2012

Humphrey Muambo, the Technical adviser of the organisation thinks that, "Ecotourism has dramatically changed the tourism landscape in Buea. Since the introduction of the ecotourism project, more tourists have been attracted to the city of Buea on word of mouth recommendation from other tourists that have visited the town. The Mt Cameroon project has reinvented the hiking experience by including new tracks that have prolonged the hiking trip

from two to eight days. This trip gives tourist time to withdraw from public life and experience nature first hand. The underlying principle of the Mt Cameroon ecotourism project is sustainability. The trip has been designed in such a way that tourism activities do not compromise the future of the mountain or the biodiversity that is harboured by the mountain. For instance, instead of cutting down trees to make fire to cook and heat up the huts at night, all cooking and heating is done with the use of cooking gas. This has dramatically reduced the number of trees that used to be cut down to provide fuel for cooking and heating up the huts in the past. This is just an example of how ecotourism has changed the future of tourism on Mt Cameroon. Trees provide food for some wildlife species and also provide habitat for birds and monkeys. It is unfair to destroy the food and habitat of wildlife in order to heat up a hut or cook for tourists. The development of ecotourism in Buea has been made possible thanks to the hospitality of the people of Buea who are often ready welcome tourists and provide them with assistance on how to find their way." 14th June 2012

Baum Mandy, former DED technical adviser (DED is a German development NGO that started the organisation), believes that, "Cameroon offered me a unique experience in terms of culture and the friendly interaction of the happy people. The Mt Cameroon ecotourism project was an initiative which we started in 1996 after organising a workshop that identified the various stakeholders and how they could work together to make Mt Cameroon an ecotourism destination that would bring benefits to all the stakeholders. After that encounter, the Mt Cameroon ecotourism organisation was created and since then, the organisation has attracted tourists and promoted sustainable tourism in Mt Cameroon. The goals of the project are to create a platform for the development of sustainable tourism in the rest of the country. The project has been designed to serve as an example and it is achieving this goal. Before I got my new appointment, I was amazed of the achievements of the organisation in terms of

the respect for biodiversity and protection of the environment. Things cannot happen over night. It will take a while for the project to achieve all its goals considering the fact that the concept of sustainability is relatively new in Cameroon." 16th May 2012

Mbella Moki Charles, the Mayor of Buea Rural Council states that, "Buea is leading the way as far as ecotourism is concerned in Cameroon. We are proud to be the flag bearers of this new way of organising and managing the tourism industry considering the fact that it takes interest in the well being of local populations, protection biodiversity and the future of the industry at large. We hope that other towns will take into consideration the importance of ecotourism and develop programmes similar to the Mt Cameroon ecotourism project in Cameroon. I want to use this opportunity to say that Buea is a town of hospitality and I will like to invite those who have not visited this nice town before to make a trip to Buea and they will never regret it. In addition to the Mountain, Buea has other attractive sites such as the Tole Tea Plantation, the University of Buea, The Bismark Fountain and the Prime Minister's lodge, which was constructed by the Germans in 1903 for the resident colonial administrator. Buea also offers warm traditional events such as the monthly Maalay and Elephant dance festivals which have continued to stun tourists. This town also hosts the annual Mt Cameroon race of hope which attracts athletes from all over the world in the first quarter of each year. This is also a wonderful period to visit Mt Cameroon and the city of Buea considering the fact that it is always jammed with tourists giving a different perspective to hiking." 17th June 2012

CHAPTER FOUR – CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Summary

The promotion of ecotourism is, without any doubt, an effective strategy which can help the global tourism industry to incorporate sustainability in the sector. This is as a result of the fact that ecotourism promotes the conservation of wildlife and the ecosystem, which constitutes a sustainable practice which is necessary for the development of sustainable tourism. Tourism is a major industry in the global economy and employs about 11% of the global work force (Woodgate et al, 2011). The sector needs to be nurtured to ensure that the existing jobs in the sector are consolidated. One of the ways through which these jobs can be consolidated is via the promotion of ecotourism, taking into consideration the fact that this approach creates jobs without destroying the environment. The tourism industry will continue to be an important industry in the global economy. For this reason, it is important for the actors in this sector to consider the effects of their actions in the future. Other economic activities that compromise the future of the tourism industry must also be carefully considered and properly managed in an effort to mitigate the impact of their effects on the tourism sector. In Nigeria, for instance, over three years of unsustainable practices in the petroleum industry has affected the environment and tourism in the Niger Delta (Sumelong, 2012). Large scale pollution has resulted in the accumulation of waste oil underneath the creeks of the Niger Delta. These waters used to constitute an ecotourism site where researchers and bird watchers used to visit to study the wildlife or simply catch a glimpse of the biodiversity in this region. The number of tourists visiting the area has declined dramatically and fishing is no longer possible as the toxic waste in the waters have killed marine life and make it unattractive to fish, thereby bringing a sudden end to the way of life of the fishermen who have been making a living from waters for decades (Woodgate et al,

2011). These creeks have developed a pungent odour over the years, which is harmful to the health of those who inhale this toxic petroleum waste. The promotion of ecotourism is important because it will take into consideration the effects of other sectors on the tourism industry. Practices that compromise the future of the environment and the tourism industry must be discouraged at all cost.

Ecotourism in Mt Cameroon constitutes an example of what can be done to promote sustainable tourism not just on Mt Cameroon, but across the country and the global tourism industry at large. Ecotourism promotes environmentally responsible behaviour because it creates awareness amongst all the actors of the industry over the importance of respecting the environment and avoiding practices that compromise the future of the industry (Fonka & Mesape, 2010). The tour guides that lead tourists on hiking trips to Mt Cameroon have been trained on the importance of respecting the environment and avoiding practices that can compromise the future of the industry. In the past, for example, guides used to cut down trees around the accommodation huts on the mountain, leaving the water in the trees to evaporate so that they can be burnt up as fuel in the future to heat up huts and cook meals for the tourists. After the introduction of ecotourism, the guides have become aware of the fact that cutting down trees destroys the habitat of birds along the paths, leads to erosion and ultimately reduction in the quantity of oxygen released by the trees at night (Sumelong, 2012). Mindful of the fact that these previous notions compromise the future of the tourism industry, tour guides today have their private portable gas cookers which they use for cooking and heating the huts considering that some of these huts are located in areas where the night temperatures sometimes drop below 1 degree (Fonka & Mesape, 2010). This is a clear demonstration of how ecotourism on Mt Cameroon is resulting in the promotion of sustainable tourism. This example needs to be adopted by other regions in Cameroon in order

to ensure that sustainable tourism becomes a norm. Once the various actors in the tourism industry understand that unsustainable practices will compromise their livelihood, many of them will be forced to reconsider their actions as some actors have already invested too many resources in the sector which they expect to cover in the long run. Owners of hotels on the slopes of Mt Cameroon have understood that proper refuse management is required so as to attract more tourists to their hotels. Failure to properly treat refuse will attract mosquitoes that will deliver an unpleasant experience to the tourists that sleep in the hotel. Instead of just dumping refuse somewhere nearby, hotels around Mt Cameroon have learnt to adopt more sustainable practices such as the proper treatment of waste.

Although ecotourism is widely promoted around Mt Cameroon, the dream of creating a hundred percent ecotourism environment is still to be achieved. Much has to be done to ensure that sustainable tourism takes place not just in Mt Cameroon, but the country at large. Compared to its past, it is right to say that Cameroon has taken a first step towards making ecotourism a norm in the entire country. However, when compared to other developed countries, Cameroon is lagging far behind and needs to do more in order to accelerate the pace at which ecotourism develops. There is need to develop general awareness on the importance of sustainability in the life of an average Cameroon. Once that culture is created, it will then become relatively easier for the average Cameroonian to implement these notions in whatever they do including tourism. In reality, it takes a long period of time to develop a culture. That notwithstanding, there must be a take off point, which in my opinion, is the creation of awareness amongst Cameroonians involved in the tourism sector. Once the awareness has been created, one can be sure that this awareness will later be transformed into practice and impact the tourism industry. The world is currently going through a financial crisis which implies that there is less disposable income. This is expected to hurt the tourism

industry. In an effect to mitigate the effects of this crisis, the sector needs to work harder to persuade potential travellers to embark on trips.

Considering the fact that tourism industry employs over 10 percent of Cameroon's work force and generates income for the country, the government ought to be on its guard at every moment, working hard to ensure that the sector continually improves so and to also improve benefits ripped by country at large. Sustainable tourism will create more jobs for Cameroonians while protecting the environment considering the fact that it is relatively new in Cameroon (Woodgate et al, 2011). Unfortunately, the government has only put in little efforts to improve the sector over the last few decades. The improvement of the tourism industry in Cameroon has to be developed in consideration of two major goals, which include attracting more tourists annually into the country and ensuring that the industry as a whole develops a culture of sustainability (Sumelong, 2012). In order to successfully create a sustainable tourism industry in Cameroon, it is necessary for the government and the tourism industry to consider the following recommendations which have been developed based on the outcome of the analysis of data gathered for this study. These recommendations will enable Cameroon to achieve the goal of developing sustainable tourism in the country.

4.2 Recommendations

In the light of the above, it is necessary for Cameroon's Ministry of Tourism to put into place new measures that will enable the country to transform the tourism sector into a masterpiece when it comes to sustainable tourism in the Central African sub-region. Amongst some of the measures through which the development of sustainable tourism can be achieved in

Cameroon are the following recommendations which are exclusively based on the out come of data gathered and analysed for this particular study.

i - Promote Ecotourism

The promotion of ecotourism will enable the government of achieving its goal of developing a sustainable industry because ecotourism is all about sustainability. When tourism takes into consideration the needs of future generations, it can be considered as sustainable and this is just what ecotourism is all about. It seeks to generate a source of living for the present generation while making sure that the biodiversity resources are not depleted. The promotion of ecotourism can be achieved by replicating the projects similar to the Mt Cameroon ecotourism project. This will result in the promotion of sustainable tourism in other parts of Cameroon that are yet to start implement more efficient tourism practices that take into consideration the well being of the environment and do not compromise the needs of future generations.

ii - Education

A sustainable tourism can only be developed if the government educates the various actors and stakeholders in the sector about the importance of sustainability in the sector. Meanwhile the government considers the long term benefits of sustainability, it is important to note that investors put their finances at stake in order to make profits. Their goals and objectives are different from those of the government's Ministry of Tourism. Consequently, most of the private actors in the sector focus on profiteering. The first step towards developing the culture of sustainability in the sector is by educating those in the sector about the importance of sustainability for the future of their livelihood. Education can be done through the media,

workshops and seminars that seek to improve the way in which actors within the industry carry out their operations in an effort to incorporate the principles of sustainable tourism.

iii -Waste Treatment

One of the absent characteristics of sustainability within the Cameroonian tourism industry is inadequate proper treatment of waste. Protection of the environment can best be achieved through proper treatment of waste taking into consideration the fact that improper waste treatment can have harmful effects on the environment that can affect the health of surrounding populations. It is therefore important to introduce proper waste treatment plan in tourist destinations across Cameroon as one of the measures to promote sustainable tourism in Cameroon. This will eliminate the unhealthy scene which is created by untreated waste that is sometimes littered around tourist destinations. Waste treatment programmes need to be incorporated in the management of each tourism destination in order to prevent a situation where tourist dump refuse carelessly around the tourism destination. Even in the case where the government cannot afford industrial waste treatment plans, managers of tour sites need to know how to carry out basic waste treatment such as digging a pit to dump vegetable waste where it can be safely buried to prevent unwanted odours.

iv -Training

Training and retraining can give new dimension on the understanding of the important concepts of sustainability such as efficiency, consideration for the future and the effects of the tourism industry on other sectors of the economy. Many of the employees in Cameroon's tourism industry have just basic education and training, which makes it difficult for them to develop their know how on how to transform the industry into a sustainable one. Some of the highly trained practitioners in the sector were trained several years back, when the industry had not gain consciousness on the effects of unsustainable practices on the industry in the

medium and long term. Training facilities in Cameroon need to introduce sustainability in their training. In order to achieve this objective, the ministry of tourism needs to review the curriculum of tourism training institutions to ensure that they adapt to the changing times. Unless trainees are taught how to carry out sustainable tourism operations, they will not be able to do so and consequently, they will fail to implement the goal of developing a sustainable tourism industry in Cameroon.

v - Regulation

Cameroon in general is characterised by a weak legal system and judiciary. Little is done by the government to implement the laws that can help to safeguard the environment. This affects ecotourism in the country considering the fact that the country's biodiversity is depleted by poachers who hunt wild animals to sell their meat, skin and ivory to traffickers. This will affect the industry in the long run because tourists who are attracted to Cameroon to watch wildlife in its natural habitat will no longer do so once the species that attract them become extinct in Cameroon. It is therefore in the interest of the government and all stakeholders of the tourism industry to make sure that strong laws are put in place and enforced to protect the country's rich biodiversity. This is because one of the major sources of attraction of western tourists into Africa is the continent's rich biodiversity. Killing these animals for their meat means that in the long run, the continent can lose this major source of attraction and consequently the revenue earned from tourism.

vi – Marketing and Promotion

The goal of creating a sustainable tourism industry is to ensure that the sector generates income without compromising future needs of the tourism sector and other sectors of the government. The tourism sector can only generate maximum income if it is showcased to the rest of the world via aggressive marketing and promotion campaigns. To begin with, the government has to start by ensuring that the ministry of tourism attends tourism exhibitions

around the world with printed brochures that can throw more light about the potential of Cameroon's tourism sector. This will raise the interest of guided tour operators who are more likely to include Cameroon as a tourist destination. Unfortunately, Cameroon's participation in events of this nature is often weak, leaving a major opportunity to market the sector to slip away. Another medium through which the country can market its tourism industry is via the use of international electronic media such as the BBC and CNN that have the ability to reach out to millions of westerners and potential travellers at the same time. This will sell the country as a tourist destination.

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Interviews

- Manager of Mount Cameroon Ecotourism Organisation
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